

CH-223
John B. McFerrin Memorial Methodist Episcopal
Church & Parsonage
La Plata
Private

circa 1880
1890-1892

The McFerrin Memorial Methodist Episcopal Church & Parsonage property consists of 1.78 acres which contains two historic church-related buildings. One is the first Methodist church built in the town of La Plata between 1890 and 1892. The other is the Methodist parsonage erected prior to the church circa 1880. Both buildings are frame structures with minimal architectural decoration.

McFerrin Memorial Methodist Episcopal Church and Parsonage is one of two remaining historic religious properties left in the town of La Plata. Of simple, but refined design, the church building may be the only example of a church in Charles County with designs based on a set of catalog plans provided by the Methodist church administration. Pre-dating the church, the parsonage represents a period in the history of Methodism in Charles County when circuit riders, or traveling ministers, served several congregations within a designated "circuit." Architecturally, the two buildings retain their historic setting and character, and are significant for their association to one another.

Both buildings are scheduled for demolition to make way for the construction of an office building.

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST
MD INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES

Inventory No. CH-223

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1. Name of Property

=====

historic name John B. McFerrin Memorial Methodist Episcopal Church
& Parsonage

common/other name La Plata Methodist Episcopal Church

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2. Location

=====

street & number Kent Avenue not for publication _____
city or town La Plata vicinity _____ state Maryland code MD
county Charles code 017 zip code 20646

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3. State/Federal Agency Certification N/A

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4. National Park Service Certification N/A

=====

5. Classification

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Ownership of Property (Check all that apply)

☒ private
☐ public-local
☐ public-State
☐ public-Federal

Category of Property (Check only one box)

☒ building(s)
☐ district
☐ site
☐ structure
☐ object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing Noncontributing

<u>3</u>	<u>1</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>3</u>	<u>1</u>	Total

Is this property listed in the National Register?

Yes _____ Name of Listing _____
No X

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Inventory No. CH-223

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6. Function or Use

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Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: RELIGIOUS

Sub: Church

RELIGIOUS

Parsonage

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Vacant

Sub: _____

=====

7. Description

=====

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Victorian Gothic Revival

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Solid: stretcher bond brick

roof Front gable: pressed metal sheets

walls Wood frame: wood German siding

other _____

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property.)

See Continuation Sheet No. 7-1

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Inventory No. CH-223

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8. Statement of Significance

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Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- ☒ A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- ☐ A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ B removed from its original location.
- ☐ C a birthplace or a grave.
- ☐ D a cemetery.
- ☐ E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ F a commemorative property.
- ☐ G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Inventory No. CH-223

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Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance circa 1880 - 1949

Significant Dates circa 1880

1890-1892

1949

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation Undefined

Architect/Builder Unknown (possibly Board of Church
Extension, Methodist Episcopal Church, Catalog
plan)

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property.)

See Continuation Sheet No. 8-1

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Inventory No. CH-223

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Inventory No. CH-223

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9. Major Bibliographical References

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(Cite the books, articles, legal records, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

Brown, Jack D., et al. *Charles County, Maryland, A History*. Charles County Bicentennial Committee, 1976.

Charles County Land Records. Charles County Courthouse, La Plata, Maryland.

Klapthor, Margaret Brown. *The History of Charles County, Maryland*. La Plata, MD: Charles County Tercentenary, Inc., 1958.

Wearmouth, John. *La Plata, Maryland: 1888-1988, 100 Years the Heart of Charles County*. La Plata, MD: Town of La Plata, 1988.

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Inventory No. CH-223

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10. Geographical Data

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Acreage of Property 1.78 acres

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The property is designated as Lot 16 on Map 115 on the La Plata Property Map.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The church and parsonage have been associated with Lot 16, Map 115 since their construction.

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11. Form Prepared By

=====

name/title Kathryn Gettings Smith, Architectural Historian
organization Charles County Planning Dept. date May 5, 1999
street & number P.O. Box B telephone 301-645-0689
city or town La Plata state MD zip code 20646

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12. Property Owner

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name Helen Lawlor
street & number 910 Hickory Circle telephone _____
city or town La Plata state MD zip code 20646

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MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Inventory No. CH-223

Section 7 Page 1

McFerrin Memorial Church
name of property
Charles County, Maryland
county and state

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The McFerrin Memorial Methodist Episcopal Church & Parsonage property consists of 1.78 acres with two historic church-related buildings. One is the first Methodist church built in the town of La Plata in 1890 and the other is the Methodist parsonage erected prior to the church circa 1880. Both buildings are frame structures with minimal architectural decoration.

The 1.78 acre lot is located on the east side of Kent Avenue (once N. Oak Avenue), just east of the railroad tracks that bisect the town of La Plata. Both buildings are set back approximately one hundred feet from the street and are surrounded by mature shade trees. Each building has a single associated outbuilding.

PARSONAGE:

The older of the two buildings is the 2-story frame parsonage. Built circa 1885 in a standard vernacular I-house design, the dwelling features a decorative center gable and a original rear "ell." The structure stands on solid brick foundation, and was originally clad in wood German siding that is now visible through breaks in the "brick-tex" asphalt sheet cladding. Two inter brick chimneys break the roof line and have arched caps. Molded wood fascia and cornice boards adorn the building's eaves, and cornice returns terminate the side gable roof. Only a few of the original 2/2 wood sash windows remain.

The dwelling's facade is pierced by three bays on its first story and three aligned bays above. The main entrance is centered on the facade and contains a single-leaf panel-and-light wood door. The entrance is sheltered by a front gable hood supported by simple wood brackets. The main entrance is flanked on either side by grouped windows. Both groups are replacements for earlier single windows. To the south is a pair of modern style 2/2 wood windows, while to the north of the entrance, a tri-partite window pierces the first story wall. This triple window is composed of a central fixed 1-light window flanked by narrow 2/2 windows. Both window combinations are adorned by a square-edged lintel and sill. The three evenly spaced second story bays each contain 2/2 modern wood sash.

The south gable end of the house holds two original windows stacked one atop the other, while the south elevation of the original rear "ell" has been obscured by a 2-story shed addition across most of its length. Clad in faux vertical board panels, this frame addition features several different types of windows, including one

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES
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Section 7 Page 2

McFerrin Memorial Church
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county and state

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6/6 sash, several modern 2/2 sash windows, and a group of three 6-light wood awning windows. The second story of the addition is accessed from the exterior via a winding metal stair, while a single panel-and-light door enters into the first story.

The only original rear window visible is located on the second story of the main I-house south of the "ell." Several small 2/2 windows pierce the rear gable end of the "ell" and its shed addition. The north wall of the original "ell" contains two stacked rows of three windows. All of these contain modern 2/2 sash. The north gable end of the "ell" displays only one original window on the second story. The first story has been covered by an enclosed "sun room" addition. This addition is enclosed with a continuous row of 1/1 metal sash windows.

A 1-story frame garage that has been reclad in "brick-tex" asphalt sheeting stands northeast of the parsonage. Its asymmetrical gable roof indicated that the building may at one time served as a chicken house or other animal shelter prior to the advent of the automobile. Double vertical board doors open on the west wall of the garage.

The parsonage interior reveals more elaborate decorative finishes than does the altered exterior. The entrance opens into a wide central stair hall with its dog-leg, half-landing stair with a decorative turned newel and balusters. The open stringer is adorned by scroll cut brackets, and decorative pendant adorn the under-carriage. The stair hall opens into an altered north parlor through a replacement shallow arched opening. To the south of the central hall is a private parlor accessed through an original 4-panel wood door. This room retains most of its original finishes including the random width tongue-and-groove floor, the simple 2-part baseboard and its reeded and convex pilaster window & door casings with bulls-eye corner blocks and base blocks. The original fire box, located on the north wall of the parlor, has been enclosed, revealing nothing of its original arrangement.

Two second floor bedrooms are similarly decorated, retaining much of their original character. However, the first floor north parlor and the first floor of the rear "ell" have been dramatically altered with new finishes, new windows, and door openings. The second floor rear "ell" space, configured as a separate apartment, was not accessed at the time of the survey. Other alterations include the enclosure of a door at the back of the stair hall. It appears that a door located below the landing, acted as a rear

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passage to the "ell," or perhaps to the exterior. The opening has been covered over and is now situated inside a closet built under the stair landing. The flooring in both the first and second floors of the stair hall have been replaced with even-width tongue-and-groove wood flooring.

The parsonage is in good condition, despite the numerous interior and exterior alterations. The current owner is in the process of salvaging historic material out of the building, including the newel posts and balusters.

Both the parsonage and the church are scheduled to be demolished for the construction of a five story office building.

CHURCH:

McFerrin Memorial Methodist Episcopal Church, built between 1890 and 1892, consists of a simple rectangular box measuring approximately 31 feet by 46 feet. Covered in a front gable roof, the building is distinguished by its 3-sided apse at the rear. It appears that the original church plans called for a integral corner tower where the entrance now is, but construction was never completed. There are indications that the church's architecture is based on a catalog design provided by the Methodist Episcopal Church's Board of Church Extension. The Board published a series of catalogs offering various architect-designed church plans to congregations in need of new, affordable facilities.

Standing on a continuous brick foundation, the church features two interior brick flues with arched caps and original wood German siding. The structure is covered by a steeply pitched gable roof clad in decorate pressed metal sheets. The roof ends at the eaves in a slight flair. The most elaborate decorative feature of the exterior are the attenuated lancet windows with wood dividers that line the walls. A grouping of three of these windows topped by a diamond-shaped window above, adorns the church's facade. Its flanks are pierced by three and four of these same windows, spaced evenly along the side walls. The entrance bay remains in the westernmost bay of the north elevation. A cut in the siding and the awkward proportions of the door indicate that the original entrance design was never carried out. The rear wall of the church is dominated by the 3-sided projecting apse. The apse is lit by two lancet windows placed on either short side of the projection. Another diamond-shaped 4-light window crowns the apse.

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES
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McFerrin Memorial Church
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county and state

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The church's interior has been dramatically altered over the years as the building has served numerous functions since its abandonment by the church in 1949. The interior originally consisted of a single open sanctuary that likely held rows of pews. Two stove flues heated the building, and the lancet windows were rigged so that they could be pivoted out to provide air in the summer. The original open ceiling is visible behind the dropped acoustical tile ceiling added in the 1960s. The original ceiling is covered with stained reeded paneling, and the rafters are decorative. Half-timbering in the Gothic Revival style adorns the ceiling plane. The walls below the windows are adorned with tongue-and-groove reeded wainscoting, while the floor is covered in four-inch tongue-and-groove boards.

Today the original flooring is covered over with linoleum tile at the entrance and with carpet scraps elsewhere. The dropped acoustical tile ceiling incorporates fluorescent lights, and air conditioning ducts have been added above the dropped ceiling. Several ceiling-less cubicles were built along the south wall of the church, and press board acoustical tile covers the walls above the wainscoting.

A small non-historic frame shed stands near the church's southwest corner. The shed appears to date to the 1960s or 1970s and is of frame construction with a front gable roof.

The church building is in a poor state of repair. Serious water damage has caused the south sill to rotate off the foundation and subsequently throw the building out of plumb.

Both the parsonage and the church are scheduled to be demolished for the construction of a five story office building.

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES
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Section 8 Page 1

McFerrin Memorial Church
name of property
Charles County, Maryland
county and state

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McFerrin Memorial Methodist Episcopal Church and Parsonage is one of two remaining historic religious properties left in the town of La Plata. Of simple, but refined design, the church building may be the only example of a church in Charles County with designs based on a set of catalog plans provided by the Methodist church administration. Pre-dating the church, the parsonage represents a period in the history of Methodism in Charles County when circuit riders, or traveling ministers, served several congregations within a designated "circuit." Architecturally, the two buildings retain their historic setting and character, and are significant for their association to one another.

The Methodist church's presence in La Plata began in 1877 when Robert F. Chapman donated 1 acre of land in the town to the trustees of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South "to be held and used as a Parsonage for the use of the Minister or Ministers who may be sent to serve said circuit...." IT is unclear from the records whether the building was standing in 1877 when Chapman transferred it to the church trustees, but based on the remaining architectural evidence, it is more likely that the church had the parsonage constructed sometime around 1880.

During this period, the Charles Circuit of the Methodist Episcopal Church included five churches or appointments scattered throughout the western and central section of Charles and Prince George's counties. The La Plata parsonage was built to serve as a home base for the "circuit riders" or traveling ministers that served these scattered charges. La Plata was apparently chosen for the site of the parsonage based on its central location and its growing transportation facilities and growing social and political prominence within the county.

The idea of locating a place of worship within the town came in 1887 at the Circuit's quarterly conference held at Chicamuxen Church. Records of the conference show that a committee was appointed to "secure a suitable lot at La Platta [sic] on which to build a house of worship."¹ By 1890, the committee had secured another 1.8-acre parcel from Robert F. Chapman and his wife adjacent to the "Parsonage" lot. That same year, a committee was elected to build a church at La Plata.

At the time of construction of the Methodist Church, La Plata was

¹ Brown, et al., p. 175.

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES
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Section 8 Page 2

McFerrin Memorial Church
name of property
Charles County, Maryland
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still a small village that owed its existence to the presence of the Baltimore & Potomac Railroad tracks running north-south through town. Opened in 1873, the railroad drew businesses and residents who looked forward to improved communications and transportation and the development of a modern commercial center in Charles county. The town began as a small rail stop, post office, and store, and quickly grew to incorporate several hotels, a number of stores and trades, a saw mill, and numerous residences.² The Methodist church, among many others, quickly ascertained to advantages of the new town's location and accessibility.

In September of 1892, the new church was dedicated. In a local newspaper article, the building was described as having a "neat, yet imposing appearance...[that] adds greatly to the appearance of the village."³ The church's first pastor was Rev. J.C. Sedwick, who served the Charles-St. Mary's Circuit until 1896. The church continued to serve La Plata's Methodist population until shortly before 1954, when the decision was made to erect a new church elsewhere in town.

In 1954, the church trustees sold the chapel and lot into private hands. By 1957, the property had been purchased by Southern Stationers, Inc. who soon established a stationers shop and printing press in the old church. The present owner obtained the church building and lot in 1961. Most recently been occupied by a thrift store, the church is currently vacant.

The church trustees sold the parsonage and its lot in 1949. It has since been variously used as a primary residence and as a rental property. The current owner purchased the building and lot in 1960.

Evidence indicates that the church design is based on a set of plans provided by the Methodist Episcopal Church's Board of Church Extension through a series of catalogs produced during the last decades of the 19th century. These catalogs contained numerous architect-designed plans for church buildings of moderate cost, that could be ordered at a fee.

² Wearmouth, John., *La Plata, Maryland, 1888-1988*, pp.1-5.

³ Wearmouth, John M., *La Plata, Maryland, 1888-1988*, p.11.

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES
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McFerrin Memorial Church
name of property
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HISTORIC CONTEXT:

Geographic Organization: Western Shore

Chronological/Development Period (s):

Industrial/Urban Dominance, 1870-
1930
Modern Period, 1930-present

Prehistoric/Historic Period Theme (s):

RELIGION
ARCHITECTURE

RESOURCE TYPE(S)

Category: Buildings

Historic Environment: Rural

Historic Function (s): RELIGIOUS/Church
RELIGIOUS/Parsonage

Known Design Source: Unknown

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES
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McFerrin Memorial Church
name of property
Charles County, Maryland
county and state

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Chain of Title:

Parsonage Lot:

May 31, 1877:	Robert F. Chapman to Trustees, Methodist Episcopal Church, South 1 acre in La Plata "to be held and used as a Parsonage for the use of the Minister or Ministers who may be sent to serve said circuit..." Charles County Land Records Liber BGS 2 Folio 15
October 24, 1949:	Trustees of La Plata Methodist Episcopal Church, South to John S. & Blanche Hafler \$6,000 "Parsonage Property" Charles County Land Records Liber TBM 89 Folio 341
May 14, 1957:	John S. & Blanche Hafler, James W. & Shirley A. Shelton to Edythe Doyle Moore "Parsonage Property" Charles County Land Records Liber PCM 129 Folio 406
September 24, 1960:	Edythe Doyle Moore, widow to Henry W. & Helen K. Lawlor "Parsonage Property" 1 acre Charles County Land Records Liber 150 Folio 597

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES
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McFerrin Memorial Church
name of property
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Church Lot:

November 29, 1890:	Robert F. & Nannie L. Chapman to Trustees of La Plata Methodist Episcopal Church Part of Lot no.3, Block A, 1.83 acres Charles County Land Records Liber JST 3 Folio 600
May 5, 1954:	Trustees of the La Plata Methodist Church, La Plata Charge to Rodrigo J. & Frances E. Moure' \$3,000 .78 acres Charles County Land Records Liber 111 Folio 279
September 6, 1957:	Rodrigo J. & Frances E. Moure' to The Southern Stationers, Inc. .78 acres Charles County Land Records Liber 132 Folio 61
July 25, 1961:	The Southern Stationers, Inc. to Henry W. & Helen K. Lawlor, John & Novella Samperton .78 acres Charles County Land Records Liber 154 Folio 490
September 27, 1989:	John & Novella Samperton to Helen K. Lawlor .78 acres Charles County Land Records Liber 1425 Folio 217

RESOURCE SKETCH MAP

2/99



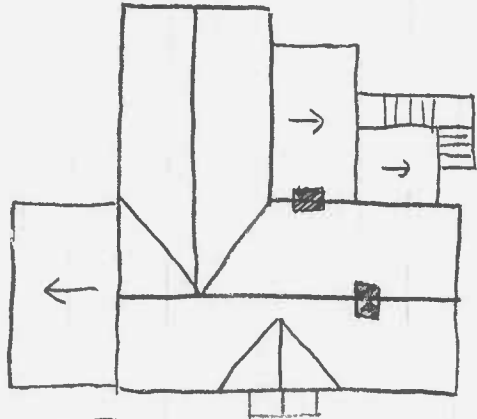
McFERRIN MEMORIAL METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH
LA PLATA, MD
KENT AVE.

CH-223

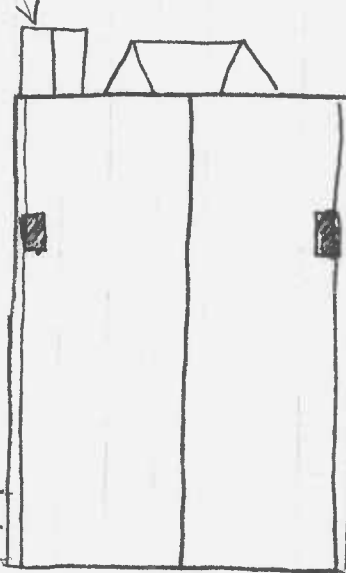


frame garage (H)

Parsonage (H)



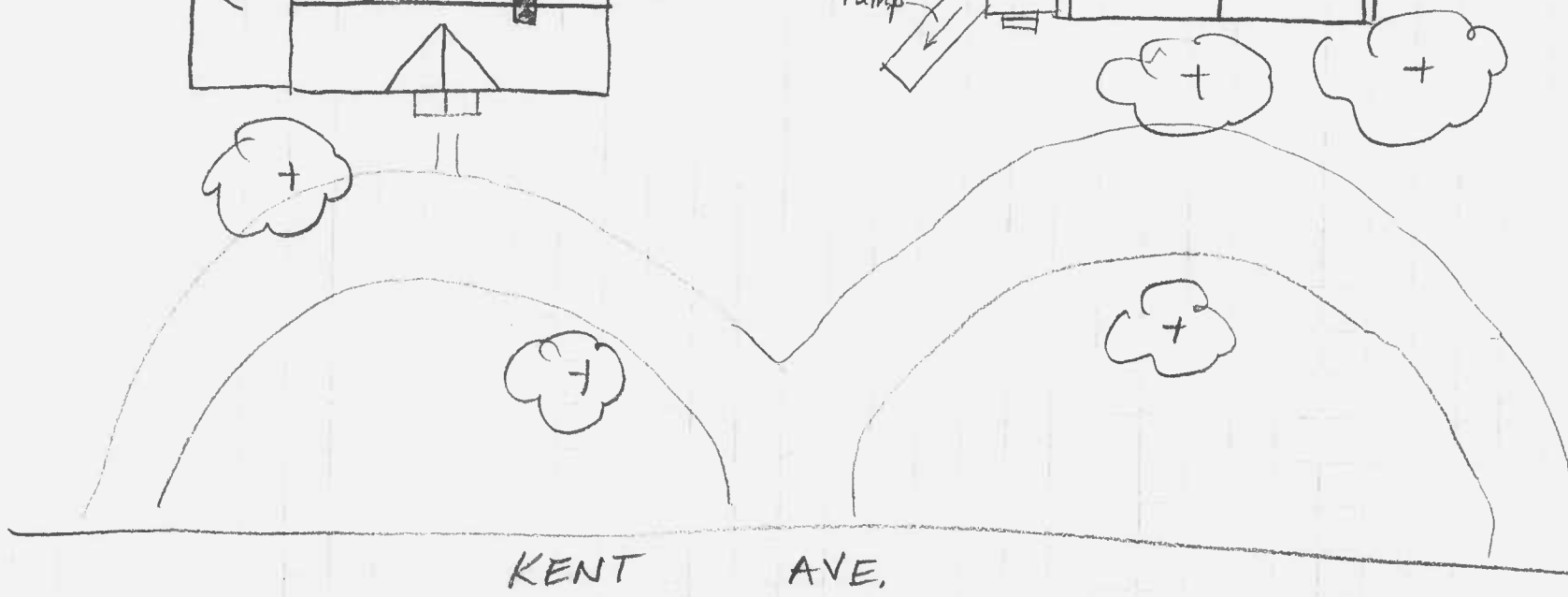
frame addn.



Church (H)

ramp

frame shed (NH)

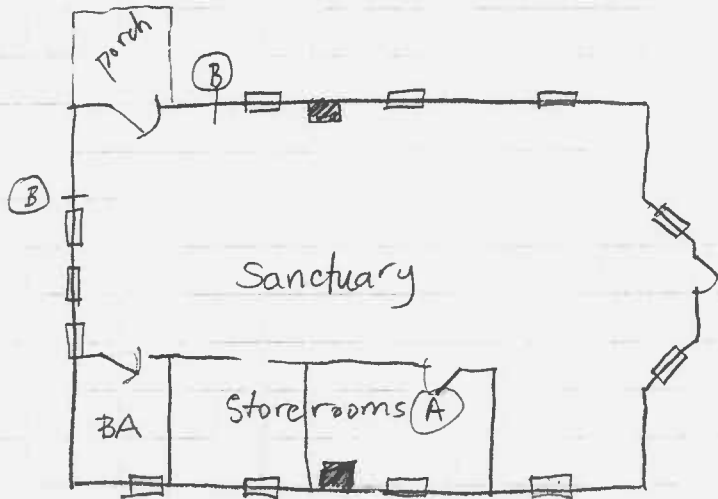


RESOURCE SKETCH PLAN

2/99

CH-223

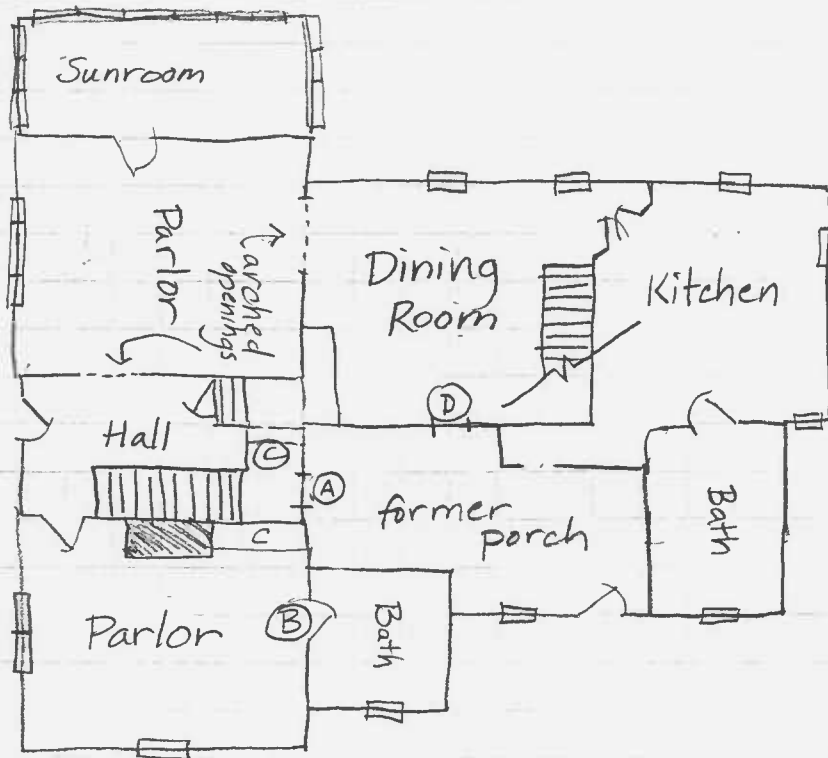
MCFERRIN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH AND PARSONAGE LA PLATA, MD



(A) storerooms added.
1960s

(B) Location of end
of wainscoting

CHURCH PLAN



(A) Location of former
exterior door

(B) Re-used door w/
transom

(C) Two steps added

(D) Location of former
window

PARSONAGE - FIRST FLOOR



N



McFerrin Memorial Methodist Church &
Parsonage

CH-223

LA PLATA, MD QUAD



CH- 223

MCFERRIN METHODIST CHURCH & PARSONAGE
LA PLATA, MD

K.G. SMITH

2/99

MARYLAND SHPO
FACADE OF PARSONAGE

10F9



CH-223

MC FERRIN METHODIST CHURCH & PARSONAGE
LA PLATA, MD

K.G. SMITH

2/99

MARYLAND SHPO

PARSONAGE - LOOKING NW

2 OF 9



CH- 223

MCFERRIN METHODIST CHURCH & PARSONAGE

LA PLATA, MD

K.G. SMITH

2/99

MARYLAND SHPO

PARSONAGE - LOOKING SE

3 OF 9



CH-223

MCFERRIN METHODIST CHURCH & PARSONAGE
LA PLATA, MD

K.G. SMITH

2/99

MARYLAND SHPO

PARSONAGE INTERIOR - MAIN STAIR

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CH-223

MCFERRIN METHODIST CHURCH & PARSONAGE
LA PLATA, MD

K.G. SMITH

2/99

MARYLAND SHPO

PARSONAGE INTERIOR - 2ND FLOOR, SOUTH BEDROOM

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CH-223

McFERRIN METHODIST CHURCH & PARSONAGE
LA PLATA, MD
K.G. SMITH

2/99

MARYLAND SHPO
GARAGE, LOOKING NE
6 OF 9



CH-223

MCFERRIN METHODIST CHURCH & PARSONAGE
LA PLATA, MD

K.G. SMITH

2/99

MARYLAND SHPO

CHURCH- LOOKING SE

7 OF 9



CH-223

MCFERRIN METHODIST CHURCH & PARSONAGE
LA PLATA, MD

K.G. SMITH

2/99

MARYLAND SHPO

CHURCH-LOOKING NW

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CH-223

MC FERRIN METHODIST CHURCH & PARSONAGE
LA PLATA, MD

K.G. SMITH

2/99

MARYLAND SHPO

INTERIOR OF CHURCH - VIEW TOWARDS APSE

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